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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 CPR-01 /056 W
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R 011015Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6804

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 1653

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: AF, US
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH VICE PRESIDENT ABDULILAH

REF: (A) KABUL 1397 (B) STATE 46801

1. WHILE PAYING MY INITIAL COURTESY CALL ON AFGHANISTAN'S NEWLY APPOINTED FIRST VICE PRESIDENT SYED ABDULILAH ON MARCH 1, I GAVE HIM VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE'S MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS CONTAINED IN REFTEL B. ABDULILAH ASKED ME TO CONVEY HIS HEARTFELT THANKS TO VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE FOR THIS MESSAGE.

2. I TOLD ABDULILAH THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE TO DO EVERYTHING IT CAN TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES AND TO ASSIST AFGHANISTAN IN AREAS WHERE OUR ASSISTANCE IS DESIRED. I MENTIONED OUR EFFORTS TO INCREASE OUR AID PROGRAMS ASSISTANCE TO THE RURAL POOR. I SAID THAT THE PEACE CORPS REMAINS AVAILABLE TO ASSIST IN MEETING BASIC HUMAN NEEDS. I NOTED THE SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN OUR MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM THIS YEAR, AND THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD REQUESTED A FURTHER INCREASE FOR NEXT YEAR. I ADDED THAT OUR CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS ARE CONTINUING AT A HIGH LEVEL. FINALLY, I SAID THE ONLY PROBLEM IN OUR RELATIONS -- BUT ONE ON WHICH WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER AND WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO RESOLVE -- IS THE PROBLEM OF OPIUM.

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3. I THEN INFORMED ABDULILAH THAT I WOULD BE LEAVING ON MARCH 3 FOR A FEW DAYS IN WASHINGTON AND THAT THE PRINCIPAL ITEM ON MY AGENDA WAS TO ATTEMPT TO GET SOME FIRMER INDICATION AS TO THE DATES FOR A VISIT BY PRESIDENT DAOUD TO THE UNITED STATES.

4. ABDULILAH RESPONDED IN KIND, EXPRESSING GREAT APPRECIATION

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FOR THE ASSISTANCE RENDERED AFGHANISTAN BY THE UNITED STATES. IN ADDITION TO THE ITEMS I HAD MENTIONED, HE REFERRED TO THE ASSISTANCE OF THE WORLD BANK, ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THIS WAS, TO A GREAT EXTENT, ANOTHER FORM OF AMERICAN ASSISTANCE. HE ALSO SAID AFGHANISTAN ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO PRESIDENT DAOUD'S FORTHCOMING TRIP TO THE U.S., "WHICH CAN USHER IN A NEW ERA IN AFGHAN-U.S. RELATIONS."

5. REGARDING HIS DUTIES AS VICE PRESIDENT, ABDULILAH SAID HE WILL BE DOING WHATEVER PRESIDENT DAOUD ASKS HIM TO DO TO IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN AND THE SECURITY OF AFGHANISTAN. HE SAID HE HAS RELINQUISHED THE FINANCE MINISTRY PORTFOLIO. (COMMENT: WE UNDERSTAND THAT DURING DAOUD'S ABSENCE FROM THE COUNTRY, ABDULILAH IS CHAIRING CABINET MEETINGS AND THAT DEPUTY FINANCE MINISTER KHALIQYAR IS SERVING AS ACTING MINISTER.)

6. COMMENT: ABDULILAH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN WARMER OR MORE AFFABLE. IN FACT, HE WANTED TO HOLD MY HAND FOR A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD OF TIME. AS IN THE PAST, HE IMPRESSED ME WITH HIS ARTICULATENESS, KNOWLEDGEABILITY, AND DIRECTNESS OF MANNER. DAOUD HAS SELECTED FOR THE NUMBER TWO POSITION A BRIGHT AND ATTRACTIVE MAN.
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